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ST.PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF THE MESSIAH

-by-

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## ST. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF THE MESSIAH.

As a point of departure, in seeking to understand St. Paul's conception of the Messiah, it may be well to review, briefly, the principal sources from which Paul as a Jew and a Pharisee, (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Phil. 3:5) would first get his ideas regarding the Messiah, namely, the Old Testament and the Pseudepigraphic literature.

### I. THE MESSIAH IN O.T.

The word 'Messiah', (Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ , Greek Χριστός) means anointed and is used most frequently, in the Old Testament, of the theocratic king of Israel, but with special significance when applied to David and his descendants. The glory of David's reign and kingdom so impressed the minds of the children of Israel, and especially the prophets, that in it they found the promise of the ideal kingdom that God would establish in the latter days. This messianic kingdom was the dominant conception and any references to a Messiah are largely second-



ary. It is the renewed glory of the house of David and the reunion of all the tribes under it that, for instance, Amos and Hosea foretold, and not the coming of the Messiah, (Amos 9:11; Hosea 3:5.) Where references to a Messiah do occur, it is evident that the promise contained in Nathan's message to David, (II Sam. 7:12-16) has created the hope that the messianic ruler will be a scion of the house of David, who will restore the glories of David's reign and bring justice, prosperity and peace to Israel, (Jer. 22:15; 23:5-16; 33:15.)

This original exception became somewhat modified by the upheaval of the exile. The nation had been broken up, and it appeared that only God Himself could accomplish the tremendous task of restoring Israel and establishing the Kingdom; so in Second Isaiah we have the hope of a Davidic king being replaced by the promise that God Himself would become king over the restored Israel. This was only a temporary phase for, with the return from exile under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a descendant





of David, the old hope of a Davidic king was revived under prophets like Zechariah and Haggai, who believed that Zerubbabel was the fulfilment of the ancient promise. (Hag.2:23; Zec. 6:12.) But these hopes were doomed for disappointment. Zerubbabel died without the promise having been realized, and there followed an eclipsing of the idea of a Davidic king. He is scarcely mentioned in the Apocrypha and later prophets; and in the book of Malachi, the Messiah idea seems to have been superseded by that of the coming of a prophet like unto Elijah to usher in the expected Kingdom.

But the very fact that the hope was enshrined in the Old Testament prophets prevented its being altogether forgotten and, with the intense nationalistic movement that came as a result of the Syrian persecution, and the inraids of the Hellenism, there was a great revival of the Messianic hope. The idea of a great king of the house of David was revived with new emphasis not only from the teaching of the prophets, but also as a result of the brilliant



victories of the Maccabees that had reawakened the hope of a Jewish monarchy. However, with the changed conditions, the hope of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy reawoke with some unique modification. The Messiah is still a descendant of David; but, instead of being a warrior king like David, he comes as a prince of peace. This is strikingly presented in Zech. 9:9, (written c.280 B.C.) where the new age is inaugurated by the entrance into the royal city of the promised Messiah "just and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass."

Paralleling this later Davidic hope was another very significant messianic development that had its starting point in the Book of Daniel. The central aim of this book is to maintain that Israel as the holy community will be supreme in the coming age when God asserts His power. "The saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom, and possess the Kingdom forever," (Dan.7:18). This community of Saints to whom the Kingdom will be



given is personified as "One like unto the Son of Man," (Dan.7:13, & cf.7: 22-27.) This human figure arises in succession to the brute forms that represent the heathen empires that are to be superseded. From the context there can be little doubt but that "the Son of Man" is symbolic of restored Israel, and does not refer to a personal Messiah. This conception, therefore, is not so unlike the idea of a Davidic Messiah in the prophets where we saw that he was not so much an individual person as the representative of the restored house of Israel.

## II.MESSIAH IN PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC LITERATURE

This symbolic person of Daniel had a great influence on later Messianic thought. He was the starting point from whence the pseudepigraphic writers developed their idea of the messianic "Son of Man". This literature is our chief source for the religious ideas of the period when Paul lived. It extends over a period of about one hundred and fifty years, centring on the birth of Jesus. To these writers, like the Old Testament prophets, the Kingdom of God in the coming age is the great interest, and the idea of a personal Messiah is secondary. Only in four of these books,- Enoch, Baruch, 4th Esdras, and the Psalms of





Solomon does the idea of a personal Messiah find much prominence.

Probably the most significant development of the messianic idea is found in Enoch, chapters 37-71 written sometime between 94 and 64 B.C. There Daniel's "Son of Man" whom we saw was symbolic of the community of Israel, is given an actual personality. He appears as a personal, heavenly being who is also the "Elect One" or Messiah, (Enoch 46:1-6; 62:2-14; 69:29). Great emphasis is placed on the supernatural side of his character. The Son of Man has existed from the beginning, hidden in the secret places of Heaven, (48:2-6.) He will come forth in the last days as God's representative, and will sit upon the throne of his glory, and all dominion and power will be given unto him, (62:6.) To this writer the Messiah is, above all else, the Judge of the world. At his coming there will be a resurrection of all Israel and the "Son of Man" will judge them according to their deeds, (51:1, 61: 5; 41:1.) His judgment will be absolutely righteous, vindicating those who are righteous and punishing



the guilty. He is accompanied by angels, and all kings and nations are compelled to appear before him and to accept his sentence. In keeping with the transcendent ideas of God in this period, the "Son of Man" will be the intermediary between God and man.

This idea of a heavenly Messiah kept in heaven until the restoration of all things, and who will come with the clouds of heaven as God's agent and representative, is the background of thought in 4th Esdras, (date c.70 A.D.), only there the national hope of a champion of Israel is more prominent. There seems to be a merging of the ancient hope of a Scion of David with the "anointed One" of Enoch. In 4th Esdras 12:32 R.V., we read: "This is the anointed One, whom the Most High hath kept unto the end of days, who shall spring up out of the seed of David, and He shall come and speak unto them and reprove them for their wickedness and their unrighteousness." He will reign over Israel and bring great prosperity, but will not set up the final kingdom as his rule is only for a limited period. The time is set at four hundred years when the Messiah will die, and after seven days of silence,





the Most High will appear upon the seat of judgment, the dead will arise and be judged, and everything will be renewed [4 Esdras 7:28-44.]

In the Second Age, the Messiah will disappear and God will become all in all. Thus the earlier outlook of the Old Testament is transcended by this writer.

There are many striking affinities between 4th Esdras and Baruch, (c.70 A.D.) Both have the same purpose, namely, to awaken hope either in the coming Messianic Kingdom on earth, or of the bliss of the righteous in the world to come. Like Esdras' Messiah, that of Baruch has the general characteristics of Enoch's "Son of Man". He is a transcendent, personal being. However, they have some striking differences. In Baruch, the Messiah does not simply reign for four hundred years and then die, but he reigns for an indefinite period and when it closes he returns in glory to heaven where his reign is eternal, (Baruch 3:1, 73, 74.)

The Psalms of Solomon, the product of a Pharisee about 65 B.C., deals with the Messiah from the nationalistic point of view. He pictures



Israel as a true theocracy, ruled over by the Messiah whom God will send for the deliverance and exaltation of His people. The Messiah is a king of the seed of David, who, in God's time, will appear to destroy the dominion of the Gentiles, and to set up a kingdom of Israel, (Ps.17:23; 28:44;) that will be governed according to God's will. He will renew the glories of Jerusalem and its temple, and subdue and convert the Gentiles. He will reign in holiness and justice, not by force of arms. He is pure from sin, all wise and all powerful. He is a person and receives the title *Χριστός Κύριος*, "The Lord's anointed". In these Psalms we have a conception that seems to lie between that of the prophets and that of the apocalyptic. The promised Messiah will be a king on the throne of David, but his kingship will be of a type other than has been seen before on earth. He is as religious as he is political or warlike. "He shall destroy the ungodly nations with the words of his mouth; He shall convict sinners in the thoughts of their hearts." (Pss.Sol.17:27).

This literature leaves the impression that there was no generally accepted opinion, no



organized and consistent teaching, and above all no orderly Messianic doctrine possessing even the faintest shadow of authority. The great hope was of faith, and all the rest was a free field for the imagination.. (1) The Messiah appears differently in different books. In one, he is a warrior king, in another a prince of peace, or a champion of justice, or a transcendent ruler of the world. The two general conceptions of a Davidic Messiah and the apocalyptic "Son of Man" blend so closely together in some writers that it would appear they might unite. Each thinker feels himself free to imagine his own ideal of the representative of God in the coming age. The Messianic idea is, therefore, quite vague and plastic. The title Messiah was an adjective meaning consecrated or appointed by God, and its precise meaning must be sought from the context in which the word is used rather than from any established significance.(2)

### III. THE MESSIAH AS CONCEIVED BY THE DISCIPLES

This plastic nature of the messianic hope in the first century has made it somewhat difficult

(1) Beginnings of Christianity by Foakes, Jackson & Lake, p.356.

(2) Ibid, p.362.





to ascertain fully what the disciples of Jesus exactly meant when they called their Master the Messiah, (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ) In what sense did they use the title? According to Jackson & Lake, the word Christ (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ) became a general title, covering the two conceptions of a Son of David, of the prophets, and the Son of Man of the Apocalyptic.(1) Many scholars claim that such a coalescing is impossible, and we must choose between the alternative meanings of the term Messiah, in interpreting the disciples' idea of Jesus' Messiahship. Either the Davidic king Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, or the supernatural and future Son of Man of Apocalyptic fantasy; either David's son, or David's Lord, but not both. It is true that the various conceptions of the coming Messiah and the various types of expectation with regard to the coming Kingdom of Israel which were held at different periods, if taken literally cannot be made to coalesce. "The pre-existent, supernatural, heavenly Man, the Elect One of the Book of Enoch, is not capable of logical identification with the descendent of David

(1) Ibid, P.367.



who is to be in a literal sense Israel's king". (1) Stated in this developed sense, the two conceptions would appear to be impossible of logical identification; but, as we saw in our study of the Son of Man in Daniel, which was the starting point of the Apocalyptic conception, the two ideas were not at first incompatible, but had some striking points of similarity. However, from a study of the Synoptic Gospels, it is evident that the disciples entertain the two conceptions, not because they were originally identical, nor because Messiah was a Jewish title that could belong to only one person, but because they found both the Son of David and the Son of Man in Jesus of Nazareth, and were, therefore, forced by experience to say that the Son of Man was the Son of David, and to attribute to either figure everything prophesied or believed of the other. (2)

The disciples did not think of Jesus as fulfilling any particular line of messianic hope,

(1) The N.T. doctrine of the Christ, - Dr. Rawlinson.

(2) Foakes, Jackson & Lake, op. Lit.1, P.365.





but rather that he was the consummation and fulfilment of all the highest aspirations and hopes of the Old Testament, not in any literal sense, but according to the spirit. Seen in the light of Jesus' life, many things appeared to them as Messianic in the Old Testament that had never before been thought of in this way. They saw the sufferings of the righteous in the Psalms, and in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah as prophecies of His Passion and finding in Him their true fulfilment.

#### IV. PAUL'S JEWISH VIEW OF THE MESSIAH.

The point of the previous discussion of importance to our study of St. Paul's conception of the Messiah is to see what conception of the Messiah Paul inherited as a Jew and a Christian. Just what his ideas of the Messiah had been before his experience with the exalted Jesus on the way to Damascus, we cannot tell with any certainty. His insistence on being a true Jew and a representative of the Sect of the Pharisees would lead us to assume that he had been fundamentally influenced



by the traditions of his race and, especially, those of his religious sect, and, hence, his conception would correspond in broad outlines to that of the Psalms of Solomon. However, it is quite conceivable from his writings that the pre-existent heavenly Man of Enoch may have appealed to him in his pre-Christian days; but the fact that, in Romans 1:3, he emphasizes the Davidic descent of Jesus, makes it more likely that he shared the more popular idea of a prince of the royal house. In any case, his inherited messianic conceptions, like those of the early Jewish Christians, were revolutionized when he became a Christian and identified Messiah with the historic person, - Jesus of Nazareth. He is then able to see, with the other Christians, that all the hopes and aspirations of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Him, -- "How many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea." (11. Corinthians 1:20.)

V. MODIFICATIONS OF INHERITED IDEAS BY  
PAUL THE CHRISTIAN.

Like Mazzini who said, that after his



decisive illumination, "I rebuilt the entire edifice of my moral philosophy", so Paul after his conversion to Christianity rebuilds his conception of the Messiah around the person of Jesus. That he had seen Him face to face, he was absolutely convinced. It was a part of his actual history, (Galatians 1:15-16; 2:19-20.) This experience meant, primarily, that Jesus, whom he believed to be dead, was alive and glorified, and had been revealed in the depth of his being. He was definitely convinced of the continuity of the crucified Jesus with the glorified Christ that met him on the way to Damascus. Following this, whatever he had formerly held regarding the Messiah, whatever he now began to find had been said of the Messiah or the Suffering Servant, gained a new interest and was submitted to a fresh examination. It was tested by this vision on the way to Damascus and in the light of the experience that followed it.

Like the early Christian community, Paul was now convinced that Jesus was the Messiah of his race, the chosen One of God, (Acts 2:32; 17:3; 18:5) The claim of <sup>the</sup> Christian preachers that he had





so violently resisted, he accepted as a result of his conversion experience. He was now sure that Jesus was alive, and, in his resurrection, God had placed the seal of his Messiahship. As a result of this conviction, he now transferred to Jesus, who had suffered and died on the Cross, all those ideas of sovereignty, universal Lordship and judicial authority, which, as a Jew, he had associated with the office and person of the Messiah. This meant a very fundamental reconstruction of inherited ideas, for nothing could have been more repellent to the Jewish mind than the conception that one who had been in his earthly appearance the very embodiment of human weakness, could either truly represent God or in any way be his Messiah. To die on the Cross was anathema; for did not the Torah say, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." (Deuteronomy 21:23.) But, to Paul, the Christian, this has all taken on a new aspect. Jesus, it is true, had been crucified; but God had vindicated his claim to be the Messiah by the resurrection, and, plainly, the glorified Christ was the chosen of God.



It is in the consciousness of what the glorified Christ was to him, that we find the genesis of St. Paul's conception of the Messiah. It came largely from his inner experience of new life in Christ. The Messiah of Paul is, to a great extent, a Messiah of experience expressed in contemporary terms. His conception is the outcome of reflection and thought upon Jesus, and what He has meant to his life. It is in this feature that we may discover one reason why his conception is distinctive from that of the Early Christian Church. He was a man of extraordinary personality, and naturally his native genius would colour his apprehension of Christian truth. If Paul says more about the person of Jesus than the other apostles, it is because he has more to say. His deeper inner experience, his wider culture, made it possible for him to move in larger regions of thought. He was compelled to bring the risen Jesus into relationship, in his thought, with the great concepts of his race. Essentially, the conception of the early Christian community, is that of Paul's; but, practically,



he goes far beyond it. Paul was conscious of the difference, and seeks to defend his ideas by claiming that he owed them to "the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is Paul's own explanation of his larger conceptions of Jesus as Messiah, not that he clothed Jesus with ideas of Messiahship that he got elsewhere, but that Jesus Himself with all that wealth of new life which He communicated, had supplied Paul with the ideas by which he regarded his Lord.

Although the exalted Christ stands at the centre of St. Paul's conception of the Messiah, yet he connects Him in the closest possible way with the historic Personality of Jesus. There is no doubt in Paul's mind that the exalted Messiah is none other than the Jesus of history, now risen from the dead. The records of Acts shows him controverting the Jews at Damascus, proving "that this is the Messiah," (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ) (Acts. 9:22.) His historical character is emphasized by the emphasis upon his lineage from David which Paul affirms to be in accordance with the Scriptures, (Romans 1:3). He was condemned by





His countrymen and slain by the rulers in Jerusalem, (Acts 9:23; 13:23,27,28.) At Thessalonica, in express terms, he "reasoned with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Messiah, (Χριστός) (Acts 17: 2,3). It may be inferred from 1. Corinthians 15:5 where he mentions Peter as being the first and himself the last of those who had seen Him in His risen glory, that he regards himself as a contemporary. There can be no doubt that Paul had every opportunity of making himself acquainted with the story of Jesus. He mentions some of the apostles by name, and also refers to the Lord's brother, (1. Cor.9:5). It was undoubtedly Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and died in times within his own memory, that Paul connects with the Messiah of his faith and not some mythical Christ.

His conception of Jesus' Messiahship is moulded to a considerable degree by his knowledge of the life of Jesus. Some scholars claim



that Paul's sole interest in the life and teachings of Jesus, was His death. That Jesus was simply a heavenly Being who came to the world to die. It is true that the crucifixion and exaltation of Jesus do loom large in his writings, and he does seem to disregard the life of Jesus "after the flesh", (11.Cor. 5:16,) and put great emphasis on the Cross, (1.Cor. 2:2); but a careful reading of the Epistles will reveal that his knowledge of the life of Jesus has greatly influenced his thought of Him as Messiah. The incidental way that he refers to traits in His Character, (11.Cor.10:1; Romans 8:3; Phil.2:6,etc.) the authority he assigns to his precepts for details of conduct (1.Cor. 7:10; 9:14) and the direct parallel of his ethical life to that of Jesus, whom he strives daily to imitate, (Gal.5:14; 1.Cor.11-1) are impressive proof to the value he assigned to the Man who had walked in Galilee.

It has been maintained that "the inference is wellnigh inescapable that Paul had actually taught his hearers the story of that life in some detail," and this finds substantial support in the



Epistles. He does not deem it necessary to use Jesus' very words, but the substance of His teaching has been so made Paul's own that it is echoed in all he wrote, and the new type of character that the historic Jesus originated and exemplified is never absent from his thoughts. "It was the impact of the human life of Jesus,-- exemplifying even unto death the life of love and humility, to which Paul's being gave assent, that that was the true life--which most accounts for Paul's new Messiah portrait. To this Jewish apocalyptic has been subjected. The hard sayings of Jesus, so contrary to the normal human values, Paul sought to translate into life, and he left no doubt where he had learned them, or where he would have others learn. " (1.Cor. 10:33). (1)

In seeking to trace the major influences on Paul's conception of the Messiah, we cannot overlook the fact that he was a Jew of the Diaspora, and there can be little doubt that the more liberal atmosphere of Hellenism had considerable influence upon him. His native city of Tarsus was famous

(1) Dr. C. Jackson--Humanistic Series, Vol. 11, pages 437, 439.





for its liberalmindedness. There was a freer commerce of mind and heart among Jews and Gentiles in Tarsus than was commonly to be found. It was here that young Saul learned Greek, and in acquiring the language, he got an insight into Greek thought. That it contained much of value is inferred when he says, "I am debtor to the Greek."

Further, Paul, as missionary to the Gentiles, would come into very intimate contact with Hellenistic ideas, and would be under the necessity of presenting Christ in thought forms that could be appreciated by his hearers. One hesitates to claim that Paul's conception of the Messiah (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ) was considerably influenced by this contact when a great scholar like Dr. A. Schweitzer declares that only in his phraseology is Paul influenced by Hellenism. However, some of the ideas that Paul expresses, have such close affinity with Hellenistic thought that we are forced to the conclusion that his conceptions, as well as his terminology, were considerably influenced by his Gentile contacts. Not that Paul's



Hellenism ever outcoloured his Hebraism; for, as we saw above, he carried with him into Christianity a large part of his Jewish inheritance. That, however, did not prevent him feeling that he had authority from Christ to make some departures from the Judaistic point of view. Illustrations of these will be given as we seek to analyse the content of Paul's conception of the Messiah, ( *Χριστός* )

#### S O U R C E S

The sources of this study are the generally accepted Pauline epistles, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon and Ephesians. It is recognized that there are some doubts regarding the genuineness of Ephesians, but the present writer takes the position that, although another hand may have added some extraneous matter, its essential message is based on Paul's philosophy of life in its most developed form. The authorship of the Pastoral epistles constitutes a different problem, and as they contain so little material bearing upon our present consideration that is not included in the



other epistles, they will not be used. There are some references to the addresses of Paul in Acts, but these are only used when they have obvious support from the authoritative epistles.

St. Paul's thought, like that of the Christian Church generally, centres around Jesus the exalted Lord of the present and future rather than around Jesus as a figure of the past. There can be little doubt that in the case of Paul, this was considerably influenced by his unique conversion experience. He never ceases to think of the glory that he saw on the face of the exalted Messiah and the fact that in Him there had come a new sense of God,-- a new insight into the inner meaning of the universe. It is little wonder then that in the mind of Paul such a Messiah could not find His ultimate explanation in Nazareth or Bethlehem, but in the eternities with God Himself.

#### 1. Preexistence of Messiah

The preexistence of the Messiah with God since the creation began, is a necessary postulate of his experience. The incidental way that Paul





refers to this conception suggests that it must have been a familiar representation among the Christian Churches. References are somewhat rare, but where they do occur, Paul does not feel the necessity of teaching or establishing the doctrine by proof. In Galatians 4:5 he says, "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman made under the law, to redeem us." The phrase "God sent forth His Son" implies that he existed before He was "made of a woman and made under the law." Paul is even more explicit in II Corinthians 8:9 where he states: "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." In I Corinthians 10:4 the preexistent Messiah is spoken of as accompanying the children of Israel in their journey through the wilderness,--"They drank of that spiritual rock, that followed them, and that rock was Christ." There is an important reference in Colossians 1: 15-17 where Paul states that the Messiah ( *Χριστός* ) is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, for in Him were all things created....., and He is before all things, and in Him all things



consist." Here his preexistence is not only declared, but given cosmic significance. The most explicit statement is in Philippians 2: 5-10, where Paul claims that the preexistent Messiah was "in the form of God," but emptied Himself, and "took the form of a servant."

Certain affinities with Greek thought will be seen in connection with the above outline. The cosmic significance of the preexistent Christ, outlined in Colossians I: 15,17, has certain kinship with Philo and the Alexandrian school of philosophers. In fact, Dr. W. Morgan feels free to make the positive statement that "he is on Hellenistic ground, and operating with the categories of Hellenistic thought." Preexistence was a familiar concept in Hellenistic circles, and would doubtless have been suggested as an inference from the description of Christ as "Son of God." However, this can scarcely be taken as the main source of the apostle's doctrine, as at best the conception in Hellenism was somewhat vague and abstract. It is rather in the inherited Jewish apocalyptic that we would find the principal source of the Apostle's conception. There we have seen that



the Messiah was thought of as existing before the creation, and being kept in Heaven for the great event of the latter days, (4 Esdras 12:25,26; Enoch 48:2-6.) The Early Church, from the very first, identified Jesus with the apocalyptic Son of Man, and Paul shares their outlook. Dr. Rawlinson states: "That Paul did identify Jesus Christ with the mysterious Son of Man of apocalyptic expectation, is definitely certain from the fact that he grounds, upon Psalm 8, the conviction that all things must be put in subjection beneath Christ's feet, and directly quotes the sixth verse of the Psalm to that effect, (I Cor. 15:27.) This Psalm could have been used in this way only by identifying Christ with the Son of Man."

Thus we can see something of the main sources of Paul's conception; but both the Hellenistic preexistence of wisdom, and the apocalyptic Heaven-kept Messiah or Son of Man fall far short of Paul's conception of Jesus' preexistence. It might be suggested that, with certain eliminations, he unconsciously works out a synthesis of both points of view. But there is one basic difference





in Paul's thought and that of his main sources, and that is in his identification of the pre-existent Messiah with Jesus "who was born of a woman and born under the law," lived a life of humility and died the death of the Cross. The fact is, as we have already seen, that Paul rearranges all his thinking as a Jew to give to Jesus, in the universe, the central place that He already had in his heart. He makes use of current messianic ideas, but fills them with new content from his own experience as a Christian, to declare all that Jesus as Messiah means to him.

The preexistence of the Messiah in Paul's conception would seem to be an inseparable concomitant of His Divinity. However we take the great Philippian passage, 2:5-11, the phrase (ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ) it can have only one meaning as a description of the preexistent Messiah. He is classed, not with humanity, but with Deity. His descent to humanity involved a self-emptying, and the taking upon Himself a mode of existence that was foreign to his real nature. As Morgan declares, "Unquestionably, for Paul, Christ belongs to the side of reality we



call Divine;" but he never places Him on an equality with God. There is always the thought of subordination which is emphasized in the title "Son of God" as used by Paul.

## 2. The Messiah as "Son of God"

The title 'Son of God' was a favorite one with St. Paul in describing the Messiah, and was familiar to both his Jewish and Gentile readers. To the Jew, the title applied to the Messiah might simply imply "belonging to God;" e.g.--Sons of the Kingdom, Matthew 8:12, Sons of the World, Luke 16:8; and in the apocalyptic literature it is used of the chosen ruler of the future kingdom. The Greek use of the title, however, has a much deeper connotation and implies that the Son had in some mysterious way emanated from the inmost being of God and was a divine, supernatural being whose appearance among men was an epiphany of deity upon earth. (1)

(1) The N.T. Doctrine of Christ, Dr. Rawlinson, 73.



St.Paul's usage, as applied to Jesus, he is neither Jewish nor Greek, although the influence of both sources can be detected. The fact that he puts the greatest emphasis on the Spirit of sonship, within the Christian's life, would lead us to find the main source of this doctrine in experience rather than in written documents,- "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." (Gal.4:6). Jesus represents and conveys to men this eternal relationship, and hence must be Himself the Supreme Son. This is also suggested in Paul's favorite phrase: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The close connection between His Divine Sonship and His intimate relationship with God, is set forth in Romans 1: 3,4,-- "Who was declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness by the resurrection of the dead." Some writers (1) claim that Paul here teaches that Jesus became the Son of God by the resurrection; but no authority can be found

(1) Dict. of Christ and the Gospels, Vol.1, p.27.





for translating *ὁρισθεῖτος* in any other sense than declare, define, appoint, designate, install. Hence the passage is not understood to teach that Jesus at His resurrection became Son of God for the first time. In fact Paul ascribes this dignity to Him in his preexistent state, (Rom.8:3), and also in His incarnation, (Rom.5:10; 8:32). But in Romans I:4 the Apostle declares that the relation previously realized by Christ was now established; He is now installed as Messiah, in the consciousness of men. The preexistent Sonship was endorsed and designated in an exhibition of divine power by the fact of the resurrection. Thus His Messiahship became an accomplished fact.

This passage also brings before us Paul's idea of the connection between Jesus of Nazareth and the risen Messiah. "Designated" implies that what He is in glory, He was essentially within the limitations of the earthly life, namely, the Son of God. This is one of the original and creative elements in Paul's thought of the Incarnation.



(3) The Incarnation of the Messiah

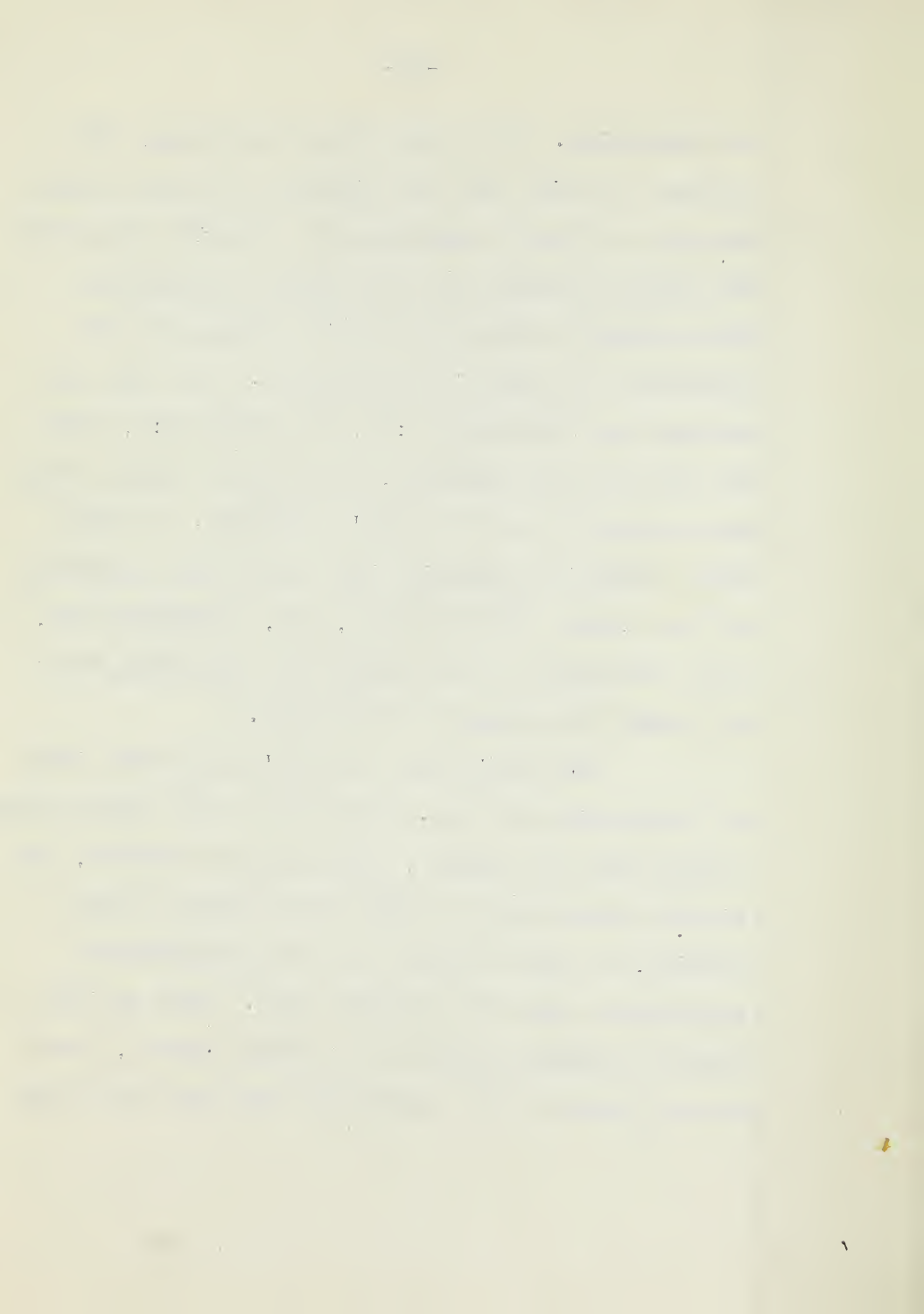
What was involved in the Messiah's passage from heaven to earth is most fully described in Philippians 2:5ff. There it is expressed as a self-emptying and taking upon Himself the form of a slave. To discuss the various kenotic theories is beyond the scope of this thesis, and so the passage will be taken in the most generally accepted sense. The self-emptying was evidently the laying aside of the form of God "native to Him, and the assuming of the form of a slave." His human life was a deliberate, voluntary act on His part, and so completely did He become man, that he submitted to death, "even the death of the cross."

The consideration of the other passages, in which the Apostle deals with the Incarnation, will bring out his thought more clearly. In Romans 8:3, we have the phrase "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." Remembering that to Paul, influenced by Hellenistic ideas, "the flesh" was tremulous with the sense of weakness and suffering, we see how closely in Paul's thought Christ identified Himself with the human family. This real humanity of Jesus (Gal.4:4) has a central place in Paul's doctrine



of Redemption. It is true that the phrases "The likeness of man" and "the likeness of sinful flesh" do seem to reveal a hesitancy to identify completely the flesh of Christ with the flesh of humanity. What probably influences Paul's language is the conviction of Christ's sinlessness. But from such passages as Colossians 1:22, and Romans 8:3, there can only be one inference, that Christ became truly man so that He could be man's redeemer. To Paul this redemptive necessity lay behind the conception of the earthly life of Jesus, and, as Morgan says, "the incarnation is not itself the redeeming fact; it is but the pathway to the Cross."

How unlike any of Paul's inherited ideas of the Messiah this is. The idea of the "coming one" "being born of a woman", being meek and humble, and finally submitting to death at the hands of His enemies, is never hinted at in the militaristic apocalyptic Messiah of Jewish hope. Such an idea would be equally repellent to Greek thought, hence we are forced to the conclusion that Paul must have





got his concept through identifying the Messiah with the life<sup>of</sup> Jesus of Nazareth, through his contacts with the Christian community, and through his own experience with the exalted Messiah.

#### 4. THE DEATH OF THE MESSIAH

The death of the Messiah on the Cross instead of being a curse, as Deuteronomy 21:23 declares, becomes to Paul the very centre of his messianic conception. It is the hinge on which the execution of God's redeeming purpose turned, and so the Cross, instead of being a stumbling-block, becomes the object of his glorying, for it was the extreme revelation of God's infinite love to men (Rom.5:8; Gal. 6:14). So important did Paul consider the Cross that he declares "I determined to know nothing, but Christ and Him crucified." Instead of the death of Jesus being a tragic historical incident, it becomes, in Paul's mind, the basis of redemption, and the God ordained means whereby salvation had been brought to the whole world, (Rom.3:25; II Cor.5:19; Gal.4:4; Rom.8:32.) "The Divine Paradox of a crucified Messiah which to Paul, in the days before his conversion, had



presumably constituted the essential blasphemy of Christianity, has become for him the very kernel of his messgae." (1)

Central, to Paul's thought of the Cross, is the amazing revelation of Divine love,--"Christ died for us," (Rom.5:6; 8:1-3). How foreign to him is any suggestion that the Cross was needed to win the love of God for us, or to overcome any reluctance in Him to show mercy to sinners! Instead of begetting love in God, it revealed and put into exercise the infinite love that was there from eternity,--"Who loved us, in Christ, from the foundation of the world." God is the originating cause of the redemption that has come to us through the Cross, and has revealed His love in the blessings that Christ has brought us, (Cor.5:19).

To realize this Divine love is to experience penitence, and the dynamic of a new life of moral power and of deliverance from the dominion of sin, issuing in the renewal of the whole being. Sin is no longer to have dominion in our mortal bodies, for Christ not only died for sin; but he died to sin, thereby bringing to an end its



rule in human nature. This new life through the Cross not only brings forgiveness and dominion over sin, but also a restoration of fellowship with God and an assurance of Sonship.

Paul declares that this was part of the Christian tradition which he had received that "Christ had died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." But, with His deeper insight, this primitive concept was greatly enriched and expanded. The disciples, in keeping with contemporary apocalyptic thought of salvation principally in the terms of futurity. The great day of deliverance would come when the Messiah with His holy angels would descend from Heaven to destroy the enemies of God, and to bring in the Kingdom. Paul shares this idea (Rom.13:11; 1.Cor. 15:24); but goes far beyond it when he declares a present salvation from every evil power, (Col.2:14; Rom. 8:3-4) issuing in a new supernatural life. This conception has many striking affinities with the mystery religions of Greece, but it is much more likely that the roots of his conception lie in his own inner experience of redemption in Christ.





## 5. The Resurrection of the Messiah

In Paul's conception the death of Christ did not stand alone, but was inseparably connected with His resurrection, and this was of greatest importance, (1Thess.4:14; Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor.15:3; Rom.10:9).

The resurrection of Jesus was the Divine stamp of approval on the life He had lived, and the death He died. It is by the resurrection that the place of Messiahship is openly declared, (Rom.1:4). "God hath made Him both Lord and Messiah, the Jesus whom ye crucified." The resurrection was to Paul the disclosure of the real nature of Jesus the Messiah. He came forth, when he arose, revealed in His proper Being and freed from all that had prevented the universal significance and worth of His Person from being seen and recognized. It was in passing through death to the resurrection life that Jesus became the true Messiah as now conceived by Paul.

There was no doubt in Paul's mind but that Jesus had triumphed over death, for did not the risen exalted Lord meet him on the way to Damascus?



The dim hope of the resurrection which belonged to Jewish eschatological thought had become an accomplished fact. But it was stripped of the crude materialism with which Jewish speculation had depicted it. The risen Jesus was for Paul Life-giving Spirit, (1.Cor.15:45). The supreme worth of Christ for Paul was one that belonged to Him in His present and invisible heavenly life.

#### 6. The Exalted State of the Messiah

In common with the Early Christian Church St.Paul puts the greatest emphasis on Jesus as the Exalted Messiah. They believed that Jesus was exalted by God to be His vicegerent in the final act of the world drama. The heavens had received Him until the times of the restoration of all things; but, when that fateful day should dawn, He would return with His angels to judge the world and bring in the Kingdom. To such as acknowledged Him as Messiah, and ordered their lives by His teaching, and waited for His coming, there was the assurance of salvation from the day of wrath, (Acts 3:18-26.) Probably there is nothing in Paul's writings so thoroughly typical of the mind of his



fellow Christians, as the picture of the Parousia given in 11.Thessalonians 1:7-10. There he shows a close kinship to the popular apocalyptic hopes. His later experiences had, however, widened his vision and in the later epistles, the expectation of the imminent coming of Christ recedes into the background, although it never disappears. He does not give up the hope of Christ's return, but he seems with time to have felt it to be of less immediate interest, and he discards much of the phraseology of apocalypticism.

Paul's characteristic idea of the Exalted Messiah, as now on the throne, to whom all power in heaven and on earth has been entrusted, goes to the centre of his conception in a far deeper way than any ideas about the Parousia. The Messiah is far more to Paul's faith than the Saviour for whose appearance from heaven, he eagerly awaits. In His exalted state, He exercises every function and attribute of Deity, and the way that Paul can alternate between God and Christ is indeed striking, (Gal.1:16; 11.Cor.5:12,18; 10:8; 13:10). The Holy Spirit is in one passage the Spirit of God, and in





another, the Spirit of Christ. In such a development it is little wonder that prayers are offered to the Messiah, and He became the object of worship, (11.Cor.12:8; 1 Cor.1:2; Rom.10:12.)

### 7. The Messiah as Lord

For Christ so conceived and worshipped, the favorite title is 'Lord' ( *Kúrios* ). It occurs nearly two hundred and fifty times in the epistles and expresses the conviction of the supremacy of the Messiah which the apostle shared with the entire primitive Church. There can be little doubt but that it was already a title of Jesus when Paul entered the Christian community, (Luke 2:11; Acts 3:36; John 13:13,14). In all probability, his conception of the Lordship of Jesus did not differ fundamentally from that of his fellow-believers, except that he would tend to use the title with a fuller content as a result of his deeper spiritual experience and his wider contacts with the Gentile world, where the title was a very familiar one in connection with the cults. It is little wonder that in his work among the Gentiles, Paul uses the title 'Lord' ( *Kúrios* ) more frequently than the unfamiliar Jewish title *Χειροτός* .





Through Gentile influence, Messiah (*ΧεlδTo's*) in Paul's writings, in the great majority of cases, has become a proper name or is an integral part of a proper name in the form of Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ. Foakes, Jackson and Lake claim that "Paul accepted *ΧεlδTo's* as a name and used *Kυπιος* to give the meaning of the Jewish idea (of the Messiah)".

Like missionaries of today, it appears that Paul had to modify his inherited conceptions and clothe them in expressions that would be intelligible to his hearers. The word *Kυπιος* would carry certain meanings to the Greeks, for their highest religious experience has been associated with language of that kind. It would express an idea that Paul could fill with the rich material supplied by Christian experience, and by the life and teaching of Jesus himself. Although Jesus may have been called Lord (Maran) by His earlier followers, it is very doubtful whether the cultus of Jesus as "Lord" could have risen among strict monotheists, such as the early Jewish Christians were, had it not been for Hellenistic influence. For, as Dr. W. Morgan points out, - "Nowhere, either in Jewish apocalyptic or in the Synoptic Gospels



is it possible to find anything that would account for Christ worship as a development of the messianic idea."

In Paul this Lordship of Jesus, as risen and exalted, is closely related to His earthly life, "He died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the living and the dead." (Rom.14:9). In Philippians 2:7-10 Paul infers that he received this great name as an outcome of humiliation,- "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; and that every tongue confess that Jesus is "Lord", to the glory of God the Father." The fact that the LXX translated the thrice sacred name "Yahweh" by *Κύριος* carries certain suggestions as to the glory and dignity with which it would be attached in the mind of the Apostle. It is no empty title, but carries a connotation that is rich and deep. The truth of Christ's Lordship imparts to the Christian life its distinctive character and security, (1.Thess.3:12; Rom.8: 38,39). To please the Lord is represented as the supreme aim of the disciple; to glory in the Lord is his one legitimate boast. The perfection



that is to crown the Christian effort is described as "the Glory of the Lord." This process of transformation is being carried on now by the risen Lord who seeks to reproduce Himself in the inner life of believers,- "But we all mirror the glory of the Lord with face unveiled, and as we are being transformed into the same likeness as Himself, passing from one glory to another--for this comes of the Lord the Spirit," (11.Cor.3:18; Rom.8:29,30). The end or purpose of His Exaltation to be Lord is "that He might gather up all things unto Himself", (Eph.1:10).

The benediction in 11.Corinthians 13,14 is most suggestive as to the place accorded by Paul to Jesus as "Lord". There can be little doubt but that the confession of Christ's Lordship was also the confession of His Divinity, (Rom.9:10). To Paul and the mass of believers, the man Jesus Christ, risen and exalted, stood in the place of God, and was the object of worship, (11.Cor.1:2; Rom.10:13). In Him they saw God manifested in human form. In their inner experience with Christ





they realized the influence of the Spirit of God. In contact with Him, and in the experience of His gracious love forgiving their sins, they came into communion with God and were conscious of changes of thought and feeling and purpose that could be ascribed only to the Will of God.

When Paul thus thought of the Exalted Messiah, he went beyond his inherited sources into the depth of his own inner experience, where he discovered that revelation of Divinity in Christ that became the basis of his faith in Him as Lord. But, amid this remarkable exaltation of Jesus as "Lord", Paul remained monotheistic. Everywhere in his writings there is an implied subjection of Jesus to the Father. Jesus is the Son. God is the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". "Nowhere", says Dr. W. Morgan, "with one doubtful exception, (Rom.9:5) does Paul call Jesus *Θεός* ". "He believes that Christ is the absolute Mediator in whom the entire fulness of God dwells, but, on the other hand, that the Being of Christ and the plentitude of his Godhead which he shares is derivative from the Being and from the Godhead of the Father who has bestowed His own attributes,



rank and Divine plentitude of Being upon the Son." (1)

8. The Messiah as Spiritual and Mystical

The identification of the Spirit of God, bestowed on believers under the Gospel with the Spirit of Christ, (Rom.8:9-14; Gal. 4:6), may find historical justification in the fact that all that was done and said by the historic Jesus was recognized as the outcome of the Spirit of God. "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." "If I, by the Spirit of God cast out demons." Now that Jesus is exalted and glorified, His Spirit and that of the Father would even be in closer unity. But Paul goes further and not only identifies the Spirit of God with that of Christ, he identifies both with the very Person of Christ. "The Lord is the Spirit," (11.Cor.3:17). Or again, "We are changed into the same image by the Lord, the Spirit," (11.Cor.3:18; 1.Cor.15:45; 7:17.) The Spirit and the Risen Christ are for Him practically indistinguishable, being in Christ and being in the Spirit, appear to be the same

(1) The N.T. Doctrine of Christ; Dr.Rawlinson,p.165.



thing; and Christ, the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God, are practically synonymous, (Rom. 8:9 ff.) Paul can use these terms interchangeably, although at times there seems to be a preference for regarding Christ simply as the "Mediator" through whom the Spirit is bestowed. He is the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, "I will pour out my Spirit in the latter days."

Paul had realized this promise, in the Christian life, through union with Christ. How often the phrase 'in Christ' is used in reference to the inner life of believers! It points to a union with Him as Spirit, in virtue of which He is the very principle of their lives; and, having Christ thus dwelling in them, believers are enabled to live His life over again. The Spirit is the active, creative, life-giving, sustaining, animating principle of the new life in Christ Jesus, and so closely are they related that Paul is not always careful to discriminate, but uses the terms interchangeably. But, as Dr. Rawlinson says, "Paul's real thought is that the Risen Christ indwells His Church through the Spirit. The Spirit, as it were, actualizes in the hearts of





believers, and in the fellowship of the Christian Society the presence of Christ who, except in so far as He is thus operative in the Church through the Spirit, is regarded as being seated at the right hand of God." (Col.3:1.)

Thus, the historic Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels has, with Paul, become the Spiritual and Mystical Messiah who lives in and reveals Himself through believers. In such a development, it is little wonder that the past circumstances of the earthly life of Jesus fall into the background; (11.Cor.5:16) for does not the Mystical Messiah, within the souls of believers, reproduce all that was vital in His historical career? It is this conception of the Messiah, dwelling in His people, filling them with new experiences, manifesting Himself in and through them, that was everything to Paul and made the Messiah *Χριστός*, to him no mere dogma, but a personal presence and immediate life.

However, as we have already seen, the Exalted Messiah of Paul's faith is none other than the Man of Galilee. His conscious possession of the Spirit of God never broke down, in his mind,





the sense of his absolute dependence on the historic Jesus for this Divine gift. His Lordship is the out-growth of His historic life, (Phil.2:7-10), and he teaches that the Spirit, which the early believers possess, is none other than the Messiah Himself, now liberated from the necessary limitations of His human life, and imparting Himself to them. It is this thought of the "Lord the Spirit" that dominates the whole range of Paul's Christian experience. The initiation into the Christian life,-the baptism by which we die and rise again with Christ,-is baptism into the Spirit, the steeping of the whole being in the Spirit of Christ; (Rom.6: 1,3; 1.Cor.12:13). This is the true baptism of which immersion in water is only the effectual sign. Thus, believers are "in Christ", they have "put on Christ", they have "died with Christ and risen with Him." Christ lives in them, and His indwelling is the great Christian mystery, (Col.1:27; Rom.8:10; 6:3; Gal.2:10,20; 1.Cor.4:8). The life they live is a life of fellowship with the Messiah, ( ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ) who dwells in the depth of their souls. This sharing of Christ's



Spirit is to be admitted into the secrets of God. Thus we have, arising out of Paul's conception of the Messiah, a Christ mysticism.

9. The Messiah as the Goal of Creation

Paul's thought of the Messiah soars higher yet, and he thinks of Him as the end or goal of creation, (Col.1:16). All creation is being renewed, summed up afresh and reconstructed in Christ. Thus, according to the Divine plan, Christ is the instrument of universal reconciliation, (Eph.1:10). Just as the creation, originally, had its beginning in Christ, (1.Cor.8:6), so in Him it is to find its true fulfilment. "All things were created unto Him" (Col.1:16). It is clear, as pointed out by Dr. Rawlinson, "that Paul here thinks of Christ as being not only the image of the invisible God; he thinks of Him also as standing in relation to the creation of God as the "first-born" who is, at the same time, the first principle of all things, the archetype of the created universe, the intermediary of God in creation, the source, goal and sustainer of the world as created."



Paul's sense of the quickening Spirit of Christ begun as an experience of grace and truth in his own soul, had thus grown until he conceived of it as the inner significance and goal of all things.

Analogies have been sought in many places for this very remarkable conception of the Messiah, but it is doubtful whether any one source can be claimed with certainty. Somewhat similar conceptions are found in Philo and in Hellenistic philosophy in general. The World-Reason of Stoicism has some interesting affinities, especially in phraseology. Dr. Rawlinson thinks, "that here also, the foundations of St. Paul's doctrine are Jewish, being drawn from the Book of Wisdom, the Book of Proverbs and the Rabbinical writings." There is little doubt but that St. Paul was influenced by this inheritance from his race, yet this whole conception of the cosmic significance of the Messiah has so many Greek parallels that Dr. W. Morgan writes "that when Paul sets forth Christ as the agent of God in creation, and as





mediating to men the knowledge and the life-potencies of the Being who lies beyond the world, and beyond human thought, he is on Hellenistic ground and operating with the categories of Hellenistic thought." But, after we have given due heed to sources, may we not find that these sources have been modified and amplified by his own inner experience with the indwelling Christ? Might not the fact that Paul had found the real fulfilment in Christ of his own universe, which was his inner life, have given him notable analogies in his larger thought of the universe and Christ's relation to it?

#### 10. The Supremacy of the Messiah

What Paul was especially trying to declare was Christ's absolute supremacy; he will tolerate no rival to Christ. He asserts that in Him dwells the entire fulness of the Godhead. He believes that it is God's good pleasure that in Him should all the fulness dwell. (1) (Col. 1:19). Just as Paul required the highest categories that the language of his day could furnish to describe the preexistent

(1) Rawlinson Ibid p.164.



state of the Messiah, so the picture of Christ's exaltation needed the loftiest imagery reached by his imagination. Such phrases as "the name which is above every name," and the "Divine Fulness" were called in to augment the ordinary categories. He was so great that "every tongue should confess, that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." For He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. But then cometh the end when he shall deliver up the kingship to God, even the Father. For the mission on which the Father sent forth His Son is then fulfilled. The Lordship of Jesus is acknowledged throughout creation, and Christ lays at the Father's feet the homage of a reconciled universe, the love of a multitude of obedient sons made perfect in Himself, the praise and service of the Church of the redeemed united with Himself forever. His own subjection, as a Son to the Father, displays the absolute oneness of the Godhead. "For when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all," (1.Cor.15:24 ff.).







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